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PROFESSIONAL DEFORMATIONS OF HEADS OF EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: CONTENT AND WAYS OF THEIR PREVENTION

Abstract. *The article deals with the problem of professional deformations of heads of educational organizations and ways of their prevention*

Key contradictions of the position of heads of educational organizations which can bring about professional deformations are analyzed. The content of professional deformations of heads of educational organizations is shown. Main results of investigation are presented, such as: most of the respondents were found to be professionally deformed and had the following deformation components: 1) intolerance and aggression; 2) self-sufficiency and slow down of professional and individual development, external locus of control; 3) fixation on a manager's position and expansion of responsibilities beyond the professional competence. The ways of prevention of professional deformations of heads of educational organizations are showed.

Keywords: *professional deformations, prevention of professional deformations heads of educational organizations, professional activity, personality development*

Problem definition

Any profession has both positive and negative effects on the professional's personality. Positive effects of professional activity on personality development correspondent to the process of adaptation to professional activity results in: shaping certain cognitive strategies and interaction techniques with material, spiritual and social objects; saving energy and resources as well as shorten time in professional problem solving through development of professional skills^{1; 3; 6}.

Negative effects are:

- extinction, curtailing of the individual traits which are unused and/or insignificant for a specific professional activity;

¹ Балл Г. О. Психология в рационалистической перспективе: избр. труды / Г. О. Балл. — К. : Основа, 2006. — 408 с.

³ Бондарчук О. І. Соціально-психологічні основи особистісного розвитку керівників загальноосвітніх навчальних закладів у професійній діяльності : монографія / О. І. Бондарчук. — К. : Наук. світ, 2008. — 318 с.

⁶ Doest L. Personal Goal Facilitation through Work: Implications for Employee Satisfaction and Well-Being / Laura ter Doest, Stan Maes, Winifred A. Gebhards [and others] // Applied Psychology : An International Review. — 2006. — Vol. 55(2). — P. 192–219.

- subjectivity, lop-sidedness and limitation of social perception due to narrowed professional viewing of current events;

- change in an individual's cognitive strategies, emotional sphere, motivation and interactions with other people brought about by negative profession-relevant factors^{2;3}.

Distinctive features of heads of educational organizations' work are:

- extensive social contacts at different interaction levels (teachers, parents, students, public, superiors);

- high emotional tension of all activity components (the principal should be a standard of good professional performance);

- overload of positional functions and responsibilities (the principal's functions include monitoring of students' social education, teaching process control, general administrative and financial control, teaching specific subjects, as well as public, cultural and educational activities, etc.);

- high responsibility under multi-factorial conditions, uncertainty of outcomes (the principal is responsible for quality of education thus influencing students' adult life and in the final analysis the country's future, as well) etc.

Key contradictions of the position of heads of educational organizations which can bring about professional deformations:

- between high positional requirements and actual educationists' status;

- between the profession's personality-related requirements and the principals' actual level of preparedness to perform professional functions;

- between typical system of educationists' training and creative character of work, etc.;

- between the necessity to educate a unique and independent personality capable of constructive acting under sustained socio-economic changes and a set of social norms and values peculiar to a given culture;

- between the necessity to make independent and innovative decisions and considerable limitations of independence by superiors;

- between the necessity to take an uncompromising stand for the institution to survive in a tough competition and to be tolerant, humane and ethical which can develop a dissonance between the principals' self-assessment of personal attributes, behaviors, activities, interactions and expectations of other people³.

Objectives are to find out professional deformations in heads of educational organizations and ways of their prevention.

² Безносос С. П. Профессиональная деформация личности / С. П. Безносос. — СПб. : Речь, 2004. — 272 с.

³ Бондарчук О. І. Соціально-психологічні основи особистісного розвитку керівників загальноосвітніх навчальних закладів у професійній діяльності : монографія / О. І. Бондарчук. — К. : Наук. світ, 2008. — 318 с.

Analysis of recent publications

It should be noted that some aspects of the problem have been the subject of attention of researchers. In particular, its are: distinctive features of burnout (K. Maslach, W. Schaufeli); stress coping strategies (SACS) S. Hobfoll; career dynamics (E. Schein, D. Super, J. Holland); the psychology of gender stereotypes and gender roles (S. Bem, J. Berry, D. Best, J. Williams); the psychology of management in education (L. Karamushka, N. Kolominsky) etc. However, the professional deformation in heads of educational organizations and ways of their prevention are studied insufficiently.

Main text

The investigation was done on a sample of 482 secondary school principals, of whom 51,7% were females and 48,3% males.

The respondents were divided into four groups according to the length of their service: less than 5 years (22% of the respondents), 5–9 years (24,3%), 10–20 years (43,1%), over 20 years (10,4%). 84,6% of the principals ran traditional-type schools and 15,4% innovative-type schools.

The investigation aimed at finding out distinctive manifestations of principals' professional deformations dealing with their attitudes toward successful career using a free description of a successful principal's life, emotional burnout (K. Maslach, S. Jackson) as well as critical situations behavioral strategies (SACS)^{4;5}. The obtained data were analyzed using correlation, factorial and cluster analyses (SPSS-13,0).

At the first stage of the investigation the projective instrument of a free description of a successful principal's life (table 1) found out a mere 16,5% of the respondents to identify the principal's effectiveness with their self-realization and development in all areas of life, 5,2% with a combination of individual and professional development, 16,5% with professional self-realization, and 61,9% with a vertical career and getting certain positions.

Table 1

Distinctive features of a successful principal's life (free description's findings)

Brief description	% of the respondents
Self-realization in all areas of life	16,5
Professional self-realization	16,5
Combination of individual and professional development	5,2
Vertical career	61,9

⁴ Митина Л. М. Психология конкурентноспособной личности / Л. М. Митина. — М. : МПСИ, 2002. — 400 с.

⁵ Практикум по психологии менеджмента и профессиональной деятельности / ред. Г. С. Никифоров, М. А. Дмитриева, В. М. Снетков. — СПб. : Речь, 2001. — 448 с.

It is noteworthy that in the latter case the respondents noted purely formal, external levels of career development without naming resources for their achievement.

At the second stage of the investigation the factorial analysis found key critical situation behavioral strategies using S. Hofboll SACS (table 2).

Table 2

Findings of the factorial analysis of the principals' critical situation behaviors (S. Hofboll SACS)

Behavioral strategies	Factors		
	Avoidance-aggressiveness	Mainly assertive behaviors	Impulsive behaviors
Assertive acts		0,612	
Initiation of social contacts			-0,621
Social support seeking		-0,873	
Cautious acts			-0,730
Impulsive acts			0,524
Avoidance	0,914		
Manipulative acts	0,512		
Asocial acts	0,888		
Aggressive acts	0,803		

Factor 1 (30,2% of the dispersion) which included *avoidance* (0,914), *asocial acts* (0,888), *aggressive acts* (0,803), and *indirect acts* (0,521) was interpreted as *avoidance or aggressiveness*.

Factor 2 (19,6% of the dispersion) included *assertive acts* (0,612) *social support seeking* (-0,873) which allowed to interpret it as *mainly assertive behavioral strategies*.

Factor 3 (16,4% of the dispersion) was named *impulsiveness* as it was made up of *impulsive acts* (0,524), *initiation of social contacts* (-0,621) and *cautious acts* (-0,730).

The cluster analysis which followed identified four clusters representing groups of the principals in accordance with their critical situation behaviors (table 3).

Table 3

Groups of principals in relation to their critical situation behaviors

Groups	% of the respondents
Cautious, social support seeking	42,9
Impulsive	22,7
Mainly oriented toward assertive behaviors	18,0
Oriented toward aggression or avoidance	16,4

As is seen from table 2 a mere 18,0% of the respondents were mainly oriented toward assertive behaviors which combined with social resources (contacts) increases principals' stress-resistance and improves their performance. 42,9% of the respondents were found to be oriented toward cautious behaviors, social support seeking, etc. It should be noted that 22,7% of the respondents were oriented toward an impulsive strategy of coping and 16,4% toward avoidance or aggressiveness.

The obtained data confirmed the ANOVA results which found correlations between levels of burnout and the principals' critical situation behavioral strategies (fig. 1).

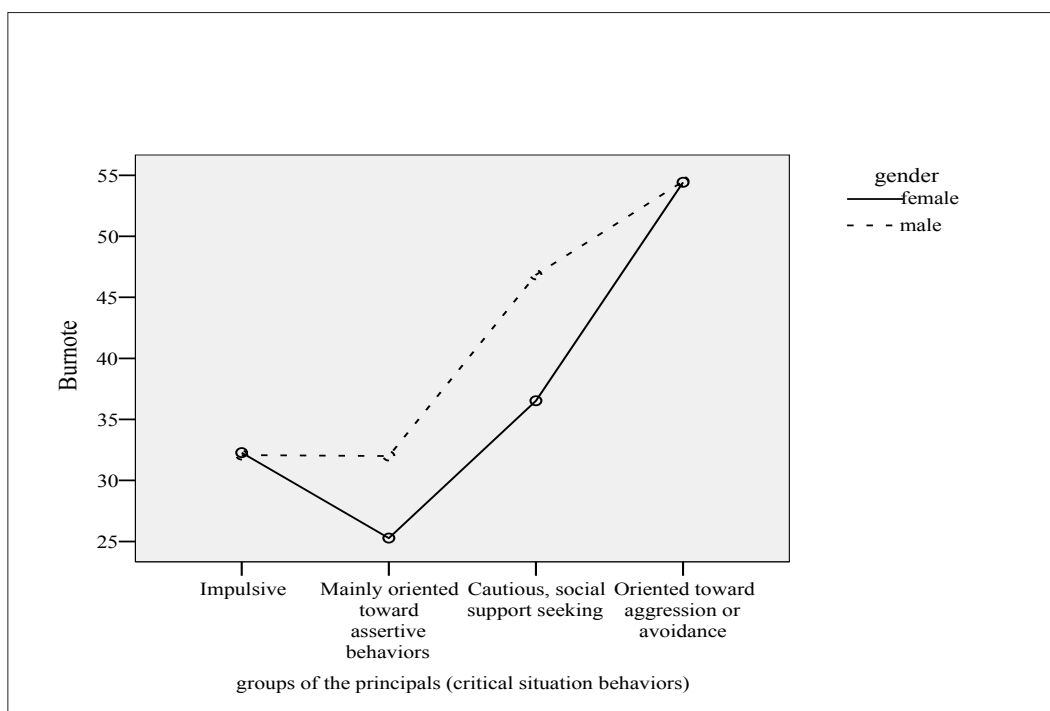


Fig. 1. Burnout in relation to principals' critical situation behaviors (ANOVA findings)

As is seen from fig. 1, the least burnt out were the principals with mainly assertive behaviors, whereas the most burnt out were those oriented toward avoidance or aggressiveness ($p < 0,01$).

The investigation found weak statistically significant corealtion ($p < 0,01$) between the groups of principals with different critical situation behaviors and their length of service (table 4)

Table 4

Secondary school principals' critical situation behaviors in relation to length of service

Length of service	Groups of principals in relation to their behavioral strategies (% of the respondents)			
	Impulsive	Mainly assertive behaviors	Cautious, oriented toward social contacts and support	Avoidance or aggressiveness
Less than 5 years	23,1	24,6	44,6	7,7
5–9 years	1,6	31,5	42,5	24,4
10–20 years	31,7	11,3	41,4	15,6
Over 20 years	42,5	0,0	55,0	2,5

As is seen from table 4, the longer the service, the more cautious and social contacts-and support-oriented and the less assertive the principals become.

A similar tendency was found in relation to the respondents' age. Thus, among those aged over 55% practically there were no individuals with assertive behaviors. Instead, the number of cautious principals oriented toward social contacts and support went up from 31,2% of those younger than 35 years to 66,7% of those older than 55 years.

The investigation found interesting differences in respondents' critical situation behaviors in relation to their age (table 5).

Table 5

Correlations between the secondary school principals' critical situation behaviors and gender

Gender	Groups of principals in relation to their behaviors (% of the respondents)			
	Impulsive	Mainly assertive behaviors	Cautious, oriented toward social contacts and support	Avoidance or aggressiveness
males	18,8	20,9	38,9	21,4
females	28,0	14,8	48,7	8,5

Thus, males were found to be more assertiveness-oriented than males (20,95% and 14,8% of the respondents respectively), they were less impulsive (18,8% i 28,8%), but more avoidance- or aggressiveness-oriented (21,4% and 8,5% respectively). $\phi = 0,215$ (Phi Cramer's V, $p < 0,01$).

Instead, there were more cautious and social contacts- and support-oriented women than men (48,7% against 38,9%).

At the next stage of the investigation levels of development of burnout components in secondary school principals are determined (table 6).

Table 6

Levels of development of burnout components in secondary school principals

Burnout components	Levels of burnout (% of the respondents)		
	Reference	At risk	Burned-out
Emotional exhaustion	23,1	41,3	35,6
Depersonalization	27,5	48,6	23,8
Reduction of personal accomplishments	25,1	60,7	14,3
Overall index of burnout	31,7	40,5	27,8

As is seen from table 6, 35,6% of the respondents had high levels of emotional exhaustion, 23,8% high levels of depersonalization and 14,3% high levels of reduction of personal accomplishments.

Generally, high and average levels of burnout were found in 27,8% and 40,5% of the respondents respectively. Only 31,7% of the principals had low levels of burnout.

The investigation found gender-related differences between the principals with different behavioral strategies, namely men had higher levels of burnout compared to women ($p < 0,001$), in particular those with tenure over 20 years.

Conclusions

There are tight correlations between professional and individual development. Heads of educational organizations' work has both positive and negative effects on these processes. The latter can bring about personality deformations which considerably reduce an individual's choice of effective behaviors and increase the risk of burnout, etc.

The investigation found that only a fifth of the respondents were mainly oriented toward assertive behaviors in critical situation, over a half of the school principals had high levels of burnout. At the same time females were found to be less burnt out than men especially those with long service. The least burnt out were the respondents with assertive behaviors whereas the most burnt out were those oriented toward avoiding or aggressive behavioral strategies.

In view of this it is advisable to encourage heads of educational organizations' development in order to prevent their professional deformations. This can be effectively done in the system of post-graduate pedagogical training, in particular in refresher training using a special deformation preventing training course. The research findings can be used in heads of educational organizations' training at the institutions of post-graduate education.

Perspective directions further investigations

In further studies it is possible to analyze the psychological specificity of training of heads of educational organizations to prevention their professional deformations. To investigate the psychological readiness of university lecturers to personal development of heads of educational organizations to prevention their professional deformations.

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The article studies the problem of professional deformations of heads of educational organizations: content and ways of their prevention. The problems of professional deformations of heads of educational organizations are analyzed. There are tight correlations between professional and individual development. Heads of educational organizations' work has both positive and negative effects on these processes. The latter can bring about personality deformations which considerably reduce an individual's choice of effective behaviors and increase the risk of burnout, etc.

The investigation found that only a fifth of the respondents were mainly oriented toward assertive behaviors in critical situation, over a half of the school principals had high levels of burnout. At the same time females were found to be less burnt out than men especially those with long service. The least burnt out were the respondents with assertive behaviors whereas the most burnt out were those oriented toward avoiding or aggressive behavioral strategies. In view of this it is advisable to encourage heads of educational organizations' development in order to prevent their professional deformations. This can be effectively done in the system of post-graduate pedagogical training, in particular in refresher training using a special deformation preventing training course. The research findings can be used in heads of educational organizations' training at the institutions of post-graduate education. Based on this, the author presents the perspective directions further investigations. Partially, in further studies it is possible to analyze the psychological specificity of training of heads of educational organizations to prevention their professional deformations. To investigate the psychological readiness of university lecturers to personal development of heads of educational organizations to prevention their professional deformations.

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